



Your Voice for Responsible Growth

January 10, 2008

Eric Taylor, Statewide Plan Manager
ADOT&PF
3132 Channel Drive
Juneau, AK 99811-2505

Dear Mr. Taylor:

Eric

The Anchorage Citizens Coalition is pleased to comment on the Alaska Statewide Long Range Transportation Policy Plan Update, 2030 Let's Get Moving!

Formed in 1998 to promote responsible growth, the coalition focuses on implementation of Anchorage's Comprehensive Plan and its forward-looking land use and transportation policies that call for building Anchorage up, not out, providing alternatives to driving, clean air and water, and safe, healthy and attractive neighborhoods and commercial districts.

Transportation investments have huge impacts on land use development patterns and community character as well as public health and safety. We appreciate the federal requirements for this plan to improve Alaska's quality of life and promote consistency between transportation improvements and local planned growth and economic development patterns.

This plan takes bold steps to address growing maintenance needs as revenues decline, the need to set priorities openly and objectively, and more.

We also have identified a number of areas where we hope for more information and action, especially in terms of multimodal alternatives to auto travel, traffic relief, air pollution and climate change.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cheryl Richardson".

Cheryl Richardson
Director



Your Voice for Responsible Growth

Comments

Alaska Statewide Long Range Transportation Policy Plan Update, 2030 Let's Get Moving!

January 10, 2008

This update boldly tackles a number of problems that deserve attention, notably:

- The growing gap between road maintenance needs and funding levels, especially as lane miles are added to Alaska's roads. We agree that maintenance resources must be maintained at a threshold level and increased proportionately as additional revenues become available.
- The dramatic decline of federal highway dollars to construct roads and build transit infrastructure, resulting in fresh attempts to prioritize state investments.
- The long term decline of state oil revenues.
- How road construction costs have increased 50 percent since the year 2000.
- The state's need for an objective system to prioritize investments, and the inadequacy of the current "needs list," "pick and choose" funding system.
- Recognition that industry should pay for building and maintaining roads built for industrial purposes.
- The need of small rural communities for a revolving loan fund to provide up front cash to build projects to be repaid over time.
- The growing problem of rural dust pollution as tiny communities build and widen roads without stabilizing road surfaces.
- The need for predictable multi-year funding for the Alaska Marine Highway System to allow for reliable, timely schedule development.

There are other sections that need clarification and sometimes, simple correction.

- It is not clear why urban freeways are exempt from the state's new emphasis on strategic investing, and get a "pass" to receive almost automatic funding (Page 11, Policy 2) especially since the cost will approach one billion dollars from a declining revenue stream.
- While urban freeways are virtually guaranteed funding, other projects will undergo a "statewide cost effectiveness" analysis that in the past has been used to reject funding of small rural projects with small average daily traffic loads. Page 11, Policy 1.
- The plan shows how Alaska's driving has grown at a rate almost three times greater than its population (exhibit 10, page 44.) Now the plan needs to discuss how adding lane miles to roads creates traffic rather than reduces it. Information

from studies documenting "induced demand" should be incorporated into this plan.

- The Urban Land Institute's recent report shows that the nation will need to reduce sprawled development and vehicle miles of travel to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets. The plan needs an expanded description of how land use contributes to transportation demand and traffic congestion beyond traditional strategies of access management, corridor management and restricting adjacent land uses to limit driveways and traffic lights, page 44. Page 12, Policy 7 and Page 14, Policy 13.
- Environmental information and goals are uneven, with brief references to climate change and rural dust pollution, and the misstatement (page 18) that Anchorage's Fairview Freeway will reduce air pollution from idling vehicles, when in fact air pollution in Fairview is predicted to rise due to traffic doubling there. Environmental actions need to be strengthened to include strategies to reduce transportation demand and reduce per capita fuel consumption.
- It is important for the state to acknowledge roadside trails and pedestrian facilities as part of its responsibilities (in lists such as on pages 2 and 8) since historically, the state has resisted building and maintaining these facilities.
- More compact development and reduced vehicle demand will rely on improved transit and pedestrian facilities, both of which need to be stronger in this plan. On page 32, action 3.6 demand management and multimodal solutions need to be "developed and integrated" into the state's systems, rather than "pursued."
- The huge disparity of resources planned for transit compared with roads – 75 million compared with 8.6 billion – shows that the state needs to reconsider whether this level of transit funding really constitutes a "multimodal" system.
- While the state has made progress supporting coordination of paratransit systems in many communities, Alaska is one of only a small handful of states that do not contribute to local governments' transit operating costs. Especially as politicians tap the state's general fund more frequently to fund 100 percent of selected road construction projects, this inequity should be addressed. At a minimum, include an action item to develop strategies to provide operating assistance to local transit systems.
- On page 38, the statement "Over a life cycle, ferries are generally a much more expensive technology for delivering a surface transportation service than either land-based roads or bridges," needs to be reconsidered with total costs to state and local government and the citizen. Does the state have an analysis of the full costs of extending its road system and requiring ferry users to drive a vehicle to their destination? Please include local government and private emergency, pollution, vehicle operations and maintenance, land use management, and other costs, not just the state's capital and operating expenses.
- Note on page 44, when discussing dedicating fees or taxes for transportation, that dedicated funds are not allowed under Alaska's constitution.
- The discussion of "over-designing or building to engineering standards" (page 30, action 3.2) and the need for controlling project scoping (page 27) in the past has been code for "sidewalks, trails and landscaping are expensive frills the state cannot afford." Please clarify that pedestrian and bicycle facilities and landscaping are now routine in state projects.

- Recommending the reinstitution of the Local Service Roads and Trails program needs to include clarification of how this is expected to affect funding levels for smaller communities.

Information needed:

1. Please provide a detailed table of contents for the plan, and a list of exhibits.
2. The plan needs an evaluation component in the process shown on page 4. While this lack of evaluation is typical of statewide and local transportation plans, it can be easily remedied by agreeing to report progress on the plan's action items every one to three years.
3. This plan should also evaluate progress towards accomplishing action items from the previous statewide transportation plan.
4. The plan identifies two funding sources, Federal Highway receipts and the state's 10 percent match from the general fund. Page 44 shows the dramatic growth in federal highway receipts since the mid 1990's.

Three other funding sources should also be shown for the last ten years:
 - State bonds, repaid from the state general fund,
 - Federal bonds to be repaid from future Federal Highway receipts, and
 - State general funds used 100 percent to fund highway construction, rather than as 10 percent match of 90 percent federal funds.
5. What are Alaska's energy consumption trends for highways, marine and aviation? How will this plan meet federal planning requirement to "promote energy conservation?" beyond.
6. Please provide a chart showing the "carbon footprint" of Alaska's aviation, marine, rail and vehicle transportation to support the statement on page 8 implying climate change will have a greater effect on Alaska's aviation and marine transportation because of their greater carbon footprint. This chart should cover the same timeframe as exhibit 10 on page 44.
7. Please make it clear that Alaska is one of a small handful of states that do not contribute to local governments' transit operations
8. When discussing freight volumes, please include Federal Highway statistics that show one commercial freight truck produces the same wear and tear as 10,000 vehicle trips. Perhaps that information has been updated now that double trailers are allowed in some states, including Alaska.
9. Please explain how the chart on page 50 relates to ADOT&PF's current Needs List.
10. Please revise the graphic on page 52 so that it illustrates the actual percentages of "expenditures by modes" and state compared with federal funds.